

House Leaders reminded us that the ideals spelled out in these documents—collectively called our “Charters of Freedom”—are spreading unstopably beyond United States borders.

I couldn't agree more. On the same day, I delivered a speech to the Center for Democracy and Technology's Democracy Day reception. To the audience of young people just starting to get involved in national affairs, I made similar points as heard down at the National Archives. The Constitution, a remarkable document, is the result of numerous forces, among them the Age of Enlightenment and the doctrine of natural law. In the 18th century, despotism provided the rule of the day throughout much of Europe. In challenging the goals and powers of Europe's institutions, the men of the Enlightenment advocated the liberty of the individual, the right to property, and the freedom of expression.

Rousseau and others outlined the legal equality of man and the sovereignty of the governed. Those who met in Philadelphia were well acquainted with these thoughts and incorporated them in the American Enlightenment. These concepts are clearly reflected in the Declaration of Independence and in our Constitution. Several of the amendments to the Constitution expand political participation to those who had been shut out of the process. The 15th amendment adopted in 1870 recognizes the voting rights of former slaves; the 19th extends the franchise to women, and the 26th reduced the voting age to 18. These were all steps to open the political process to the powerless.

With our freedom comes responsibility—an obligation to participate. People in this Nation have fought, bled, and died to preserve our freedom; and they have fought, bled, and died for the right to vote and to hold office. Although we are free to not participate, it is an insult to these men and women, the martyrs for freedom, if apathy replaces activism. I believe that we have a duty to share our freedom, to extend the benefits of freedoms to others.

Technology provides us many powerful tools, including the means to advocate for liberty. The repressive regimes of the world share a fear of information, and take great strides to control what their people are told. We saw in Iraq, and in Yugoslavia, and we still see in China and elsewhere, a repression of the Internet. Nearly one in 10 persons in the world has the ability to go on line. The Internet poses a significant threat to the forces of tyranny and provides a strong medium for advocating freedom. New ideas are a tyrant's worst nightmare, and through the Internet we can give them many sleepless nights.

On the day after Democracy Day, three former presidents of Eastern European nations, who know tyranny, wrote a joint OpEd in the Washington Post entitled “Building a Free Cuba”. Vaclav Havel, former president of the Czech Republic, Arpad Gones, former president of Hungary, and Lech Walesa, former president of Poland, resoundingly rebuked the Castro regime for imprisoning 75 representatives of the Cuban opposition, including coordinators of the Varela Project, journalists, and other pro-democracy leaders. They were subject to mock trials and jokes of prison terms. At the same time, the free-thinking Cubans are making more noise, and Castro and his regime know that their days are numbered.

Finally, the 3 former Presidents eloquently presented what we, the free, can all do to help the Cuban freedom-fighters. While the U.S. has chosen an economic embargo, our European friends have taken different, more lenient approaches. But, Havel, Goncz, and Walesa point out that while we disagree on this policy, we can agree on this: vocally support the dissidents. Provide encouragement and comfort for Cuban dissidents, prisoners of conscience, and their families. Use technology, like the powerful Internet, to spread words of freedom like our Constitutional amendments did to fellow Americans. Let's make it clear to Cuba that a dictator is not welcome to join free countries at the international table. I am grateful and proud of the heritage of the United States, and encourage my fellow Americans and fellow liberty-enjoying citizens of the world in continuing the flourishing of the flower of democracy.

TRIBUTE TO SACRAMENTO REGIONAL TRANSIT DISTRICT

HON. ROBERT T. MATSUI

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 23, 2003

Mr. MATSUI. Mr. Speaker, I rise in tribute to Sacramento Regional Transit District. On September 26, 2003, the Sacramento Regional Transit District will celebrate the grand opening of the South Line Light Rail Extension Project. As the people of Sacramento gather to commemorate this momentous occasion, I ask all of my colleagues to join me in welcoming one of the Capital Region's most important transportation projects.

The Sacramento Regional Transit District began operations on April 1, 1973. During its first decade of service, the Sacramento Regional Transit continued to expand bus service to the growing Sacramento region while a co-operative effort emerged among city, county and state government officials to develop a light rail system. In 1987 the 18.3-mile light rail system opened, linking the northeastern (Interstate 80) and eastern (Highway 50) corridors with Downtown Sacramento.

Today, the Sacramento Regional Transit District (RT) operates 77 bus routes and 20.6 miles of light rail covering a 418 square-mile service area. Buses and light rail run 365 days a year using 36 light rail vehicles, 152 buses powered by compressed natural gas (CNG) and 55 diesel buses. Passenger amenities include 31 light rail stops or stations, nine bus and light rail transfer centers and 10 free park-and-ride lots. RT also serves more than 3,800 bus stops throughout Sacramento County.

Annual ridership has steadily increased on both the bus and light rail systems from 14 million passengers in 1987 to more than 27 million passengers in fiscal year 2002. Weekday light rail ridership averages about 29,500, which accounts for approximately 30 percent of the total system ridership. Bus weekday ridership has reached an average of 62,500 passengers per day.

The South Line Light Rail Extension Project is a two-phased, 11.2-mile extension of the existing line to south. Phase I, which extends 6.3 miles from Broadway south to Meadowview Road, is expected to increase daily ridership by 15,000 passengers by 2015.

Grounded on extensive community outreach, each of the seven new stations has been individually created to reflect the character of the neighborhoods they serve.

The South Line Light Rail Extension Project comes at an important in the renaissance of the South Sacramento area. South Sacramento's population is expected to grow from 67,313 in 1998 to over 85,000 in 2022. The South Line Light Rail Extension Project will provide residents of the area with less traffic congestion, improve mobility in and around the downtown area, reduce parking demands and costs, and improve air quality. For these reasons, the South Line Light Rail Extension Project serves as a shining example of the great value of public transportation and the benefits of investing in local, state, and federal partnerships.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to welcome the South Line Light Rail Extension to the South Sacramento Community. I would like to thank all the people who, through their commitment and hard work, have made this project a reality. I am confident that this project will yield tremendous benefits for the people of Sacramento. I ask all my colleagues to join with me in wishing the Sacramento Regional Transit District continued success in all its future endeavors.

TRIBUTE TO THE LATE REV. JAMES WASHINGTON STEPHERSON

HON. KENDRICK B. MEEK

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 23, 2003

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to one of our community's most remarkable leaders, the late Rev. James Washington Stepherson. He genuinely exuded the noble attributes that define the character of God's chosen steward in his role as the Good Shepherd of various churches throughout Georgia and Florida.

On Saturday, September 20, 2003, at 10 a.m., Commissioner Barbara Carey-Shuler, chairwoman of the Miami-Dade County Board of Commissioners, will lead elected and appointed officials and community leaders, at ceremonies that will name 2799 N.W. 46th Street as the Rev. J.W. Stepherson Street. This event will symbolically consign his countless deeds of good work to the lasting appreciation of our generation and generations more to come.

Born to the late Israel and Janie Hill Stepherson on September 22, 1914, in Jacksonville, GA, Rev. Stepherson preached his first sermon in 1946 at Kings Chapel Baptist Church in Abba, GA, and was subsequently ordained in that year by the late Rev. H.J. Walker.

Historic milestones characterized Reverend Stepherson's pastoral service. In 1959 he visited Miami, FL, and became enamored of the Antioch Missionary Baptist Church of Brownsville. After preaching at this church on two occasions, the Board of Deacons offered him an invitation to become the pastor of the church. He accepted this providential offer, and the rest was history. As a visionary, he ordained and licensed countless clergymen and deacons throughout the State and across the Nation. Under his leadership more than 5,000 souls were led to Christ, as he fervently persevered to deepen his insights and expand his